

STATEMENT

Congressman Bill Delahunt
March 5, 2010

I first took the oath of office as an elected official on January 3rd 1972 and served in this very chamber as a Ward 5 City councilor – in fact that's my seat over there with the drawer open, and for curiosity seekers you will find that I engraved my name in that drawer – that's probably the only monument that I will ever see built to me.

And I have held elected office ever since -- as a state representative from Quincy. As the district attorney. And now as the US representative to the United States Congress from the 10th congressional district.

At the end of this current term I will have concluded 39 years in elected office. It has truly been a remarkable journey.

I have been a witness to history – from impeachment to war.

And during these times, our voice has been heard. Not always agreed with, but, it has been heard.

And, there have been significant accomplishments.

- * Streamlining International Adoptions,
- * Bringing the Criminal Justice System into the Modern Era
- * Promoting International Travel and Tourism to the United States

To name a few.

Now there will be time and other venues to review the full record; to share memories; and to say thank you to so many..... who have enriched my life.

And of course, there have been setbacks and frustrations. But that is to be expected. It is inherent in the nature of our democracy.

But I am here today for another reason.

This is where my journey began almost 40 years ago. And it has been noted that each and every journey begins and ends at home.

And I am coming home.

I will not be a candidate for re-election this November.

My decision is, at its core personal, not political. It has nothing to do with the current political climate.

Undoubtedly the political landscape will continue to change over the course of the next 8 months.

It is simply time for me to chart a new course. To explore opportunities, both public and private, that will still allow me to focus on those issues that have been my priority during my public life.

And I am committed to staying engaged in public discourse. And to advocate for them with all the resources at my disposal. And all the energy I can muster.

This past year I lost a dear friend, with the passing of Ted Kennedy. His death underscored the reality that time is a finite commodity. And there are only so many hours and so many days given to us.

His loss indeed had a profound effect on me. And caused me to reflect on my own mortality. And it became clear that I wanted to spend my remaining time with you. My family. My friends. And loved ones.

And enjoy in full measure that friendship and affection without being consumed by the frantic schedule that every Member of Congress signs up for.

As the Bible observes -- everything has a season.

In a political context, Chris Dodd said it best when he observed: “that, in the long sweep of American history there are moments for each elected public servant to step aside and let someone else step up.”

This is my season to step aside....and encourage others to step up.

As I leave, I am not going to join those who bemoan the rancor and divisive partisanship in our nation’s capitol and across the country. Much of it is fueled by the economic climate and the uncertainty it has generated. This anxiety understandably provokes cynicism.

But persistent cynicism is not in the DNA of the American people. It is not a permanent condition. We are innately an optimistic people that have consistently risen to the challenges of the moment.

I cannot overemphasize that there are good and decent people on both sides of the aisle whose sole agenda is to do what they perceive to be in the best interest of the Nation and the people whom they serve.

I do have a concern that this current cynicism will temporarily deter many talented people from public service.

We should remind ourselves that this phenomenon is not unknown in our political history. In fact it’s quite common. Directly across from here at the Church of the Presidents lie John Adams and John Quincy Adams.

Read their biographies.

They are both replete with anecdotes where they suffered from criticism and a cynical public. John Adams was the first victim of a negative campaign..... by Thomas Jefferson.

But these giants of American history persevered.

And as Teddy Roosevelt would say ...

They strove to do the deeds, they knew the great enthusiasms and spent themselves in worthy causes and at the end, knew the triumph of high achievement.

We cannot allow cynicism to infect the body politic, and we can not surrender to it. It too, will pass.

While it's rarely noted these days, the reality isbipartisanship does exist.

Significant legislation that I authored would have never become law without bipartisan support.

Consensus on important issues can be reachedby people of good will.... if we treat each other with honesty. And dignity. And respect.

So, I have no doubt that we can get passed the cynicism of the moment ...because we have done it before.

And we will do it again.....because we are Americans.

Respect and civility will return to our discourse both in Congress and in the public square.

Now let me conclude.My service to the people of the Tenth District has not ended.

We still have ten months left to work. I intend to make that time productive.

And I would be remiss not to acknowledge the remarkable band of people that make up my staff. I could not name a single accomplishment over the years that would have been achieved without the professionalism, creativity and their passion for the public good.

They are devoted public servants who spend inhuman number of hours working for you.....and making me look good.

They are not simply "staff." They are colleagues. And more importantly they are friends. It has been a privilege to work with them.

To all the people we represent please know that your friendship, your support and loyalty have meant everything to me and for that I will always be grateful.

Thank you. May God Bless the people of the South Shore, the Cape and Islands and May God Bless America.